

IN THE NEWS

437 SFS team prepares for AMC Defender Challenge

**Story and photo by
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Five members of the 437th Security Forces Squadron will represent Charleston AFB at Air Mobility Command's Defender Challenge, June 25-29, at McChord AFB, Wash.

The team is currently comprised of seven members, but only five will make up the final team that competes at McChord, according to Master Sgt. Richard Graves, 437 SFS administration superintendent.

Currently the seven members of the team are Graves, Staff Sergeants Timothy Stokes and Mark Furtado, Senior Airmen Nicholas Sherwood, Patrick Forester and Jimmy Blevins, and Airman 1st Class Brian Morgan.

Defender challenge teams are required to have at least two career and two first-term airmen.

The AMC Defender Challenge is a biannual event held to select members for the team representing the command in worldwide competition at Lackland AFB, Texas, Graves said. "Competition for that team is really fierce. It usually takes multiple times competing at command level before selection to the AMC team. It's kind of like baseball; you have to spend time in the minors to make it to the big time."

The challenge requires the teams to compete in five events: combat rifle, combat handgun, combat tactics, base response and the endurance/obstacle course, according to the AMC Defender Challenge Web

site.

The combat rifle event requires team members to engage as a team to hit pop-up targets across a full range, Graves said.

The combat handgun competition is similar to the rifle. Members take part in different scenarios in which they must knock down targets while distinguishing between hostages and aggressors, said Graves.

The team has high hopes for a strong performance in the shooting events. "I think we'll do really well in shooting," said Forester.

They also spend time training in the Ability to Survive and Operate training area working on combat tactics. "Combat tactics is sort of like 'capture the flag,'" Graves said. "You're either holding on to something or finding something." The event is intended to measure teamwork.

Installation response has the team responding to an incident just as they would at their home station, Graves said. The team organizes into positions, like chief and controller, and plays out the scenario.

The fifth event is the endurance/obstacle course. The event is scored using the team's cumulative time. "It would be a lot easier to train for the event if we had an obstacle course here," said Forester. For now, the team makes do with what it has.

To prepare for the competition, team members have been working together almost every day since April 30, including Saturdays, said Graves. "We've been doing a lot of PT (physical training) and do a lot of equipment training." Some of the equipment the team will be using include global positioning equipment, tactical radios and, of course, weapons.

The team finished second overall in the last Defender Challenge. "The purpose of this year's team is to build a foundation for future competitions," Graves said.

The squadron has a hard time fielding personnel for the competition, according to Graves. "It's hard to get the same people more than once, with rotations to the desert and PCSs," he said.

With the constant shortage of personnel the 437 SFS faces, the team becomes a whole squadron effort. "The team is taken out of existing manning, not allotted for, so other individuals in the work sections have to pick up the slack," Graves said. "Four of the members on the team are from the same flight, so they lost both leadership and manning. It's not just the people on the team. Everyone, even though they're not on the team, is still making a contribution."

For a new team, the members work together well. "We blended pretty well," Furtado said. "We're a pretty high-speed team."



The 437th Security Forces Defender Challenge team practice combat tactics.

Base residents take precaution; rabid raccoon found near base housing

**By Senior Airman
Jason Smith
437 AW Public Affairs**

A rabid raccoon was discovered near Charleston AFB's family housing maintenance building May 16.

Members of the 437th Civil Engineer Squadron Entomology Flight captured the animal, which died naturally at the base vet clinic shortly after its arrival.

According to vet clinic personnel, the dead raccoon was taken to a vet clinic on Dorchester Road and then submitted to the South Carolina Department of Health, Environmental Center for analysis, which confirmed the raccoon had rabies.

"Rabies is a viral disease spread between mammals," said Capt. Bill Jones, commander of the 437th Public Health Flight. "The rabies virus lives in the saliva and brain tissue of infected animals, and the disease is 100 percent fatal. Rabies is spread mainly through bites from infected animals. This

means pets, livestock, wildlife and people are all at risk."

As a general rule, rabies in humans results from the bite of a rabid cat, dog, skunk, raccoon, fox, wolf or bat. Cats are the domestic animal most often affected by rabies in the United States. In 2000, 18 cases of confirmed animal rabies were reported in Charleston County.

"A change in expected behavior is the most consistent sign of rabies," said Jones. "An animal may become shy, hide or be unusually approachable, as well as appear to be in a stupor. In other cases, an animal may appear excitable, irritable, and aggressive. The animal may seem confused and calm, and then suddenly attack when approached."

The Public Health Office offers the following tips to protect from rabies:

- Don't feed, handle or approach any wildlife or stray dogs and cats

- Teach children not to approach unfamiliar animals

- Do not feed stray pets,

and keep trash containers covered

- Keep pets leashed or confined at all times and make sure they are kept current on their rabies vaccinations

- If scratched or bitten by an animal, treat the wound quickly; thoroughly wash the wound with soap and water immediately, and then seek additional medical treatment as soon as possible

A health care provider will assess the rabies risk and decide whether further rabies prevention measures are necessary, according to Jones.

South Carolina State law requires that a licensed veterinarian vaccinate every pet cat and dog against rabies. An owner of an unvaccinated cat or dog, more than four-months old, may be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined up to \$100 or imprisoned up to 30 days for each offense. On CAFB, all animals are required to be registered with the base veterinary clinic and be current on all vaccina-

tions.

Anyone who sees stray pets or strange-acting wild animals on CAFB should call the 437th Security Forces Squadron at 963-3600. For off base reporting, contact a

local animal control office.

Questions or concerns regarding rabies can be directed to the base veterinary clinic at 963-4264 or to the Public Health Office at 963-6962.

Basic symptoms of rabies



- Daytime activity in animals normally active at night
- Staggering, weakness and paralysis
- A change in the sound of the animal's voice
- An inability to eat or drink
- Convulsions with frothing at the mouth